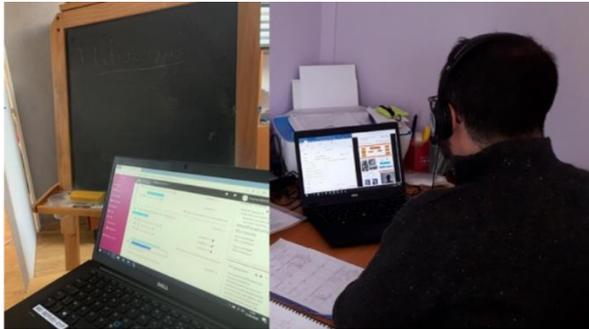


COVID-19: ParisTech schools take action during lockdown



Paris, 27th April 2020 – Since 16th March, faced with the unprecedented challenges of lockdown, the ParisTech engineering schools have been finding new ways to support their students and staff and ensure continuity, in particular with regard to teaching and research. Further to the announcement by the French President on 13th April, the schools have been doing their utmost to allow students to complete the academic year and are working to prepare a post-lockdown strategy and get ready to welcome students back in September. Alongside this, a number of initiatives have also been launched to support healthcare professionals on the front line.

Teaching and research: minimising disruption and planning for what comes next

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 health crisis and the start of lockdown, **the ParisTech schools have introduced numerous measures to keep classes running and adapt lesson plans to accommodate distance learning.** Thanks to the responsiveness and flexibility of teaching staff, who immediately switched to remote teaching solutions, the schools have been able to keep most courses running. Some schools, including the **École des Ponts ParisTech**, had already trained staff before the start of lockdown. Lectures are being conducted via video link and staff have adapted their teaching methods and materials to engage and involve students, using platforms such as Moodle, Teams, Adobe Connect, Chime, Collaborate and Zoom to interact with their students and organise online classes. **Practical sessions too have been moved online wherever possible.** At the **Institut d'Optique**, for example, measurement exercises have been replaced by analysis tasks. Adapting classes and adopting new teaching methods has meant that staff have largely been able to stick to their original teaching timetables, and students and staff are also able to access IT networks and software remotely.

In terms of assessment, the schools are analysing (and in some cases already testing) various solutions and adapting exam formats so that students can sit exams remotely. For instance, a lecturer at the **Institut d'Optique** organised a test by creating a Doodle poll to find a time when the whole class was available and then posting the materials online five minutes before the start of the test. Students had to acknowledge receipt of the test materials and then had one hour to complete the test and send a photograph of their answers back to the lecturer, who likewise confirmed receipt.

Students are grateful that staff have been attentive to their needs and are ready to support them remotely over the coming weeks and months. “In general, our lecturers have been fantastic,” says Blandine, a student at Chimie ParisTech (PSL). “We don’t feel abandoned at all – quite the opposite! The switch to online teaching has gone really well. Bravo! Staff were quick to adapt and are doing a great job of helping us and answering questions online using Teams and the Moodle forums.”

Since the middle of March, the schools have also been checking in with their students both in France and abroad and providing support to those facing financial hardship and/or mental health issues. **Additional support is available for international students** who have stayed in France in their student accommodation. Committees meet each week to study individual situations on a case-by-case basis and work out what assistance can be provided. One notable source of financial aid is the [support fund set up by ParisTech](#), which calls for donations from alumni and partner companies and is being backed by the [ParisTech Foundation](#).

Many internships and work placements are going ahead, with students working remotely for the company or research laboratory in question. Others have been postponed until suitable arrangements can be made. The schools are currently looking into how to conduct skills assessments for those students who are unable to complete their internship or work placement as initially planned.

In most of the schools, **research is continuing** and arrangements have been made to allow doctoral students to pursue their work. The CERNA Centre for Industrial Economics at **MINES ParisTech (PSL)** is still running its doctoral workshops, with many research projects and contributions related to the current health crisis. Experimental research, which involves fieldwork or the use of specific equipment, has been impacted but some work is still being carried out. For example, the fascinating X-band radar of the Hydrology Meteorology and Complexity Laboratory (HM&Co) at the **École des Ponts ParisTech** continues to record data. This is then analysed and modelled by researchers working remotely in order to uphold the lab's commitments to its industrial partners.

Lecturers and researchers are turning these unprecedented times into an opportunity to try out new methods of teaching and assessment, and engineering students are receiving a real-life lesson in navigating uncertainty. Likewise, administrative and technical support staff have also adopted new ways of working and communicating thanks to the range of technical solutions set up by the IT departments and the communications tools deployed by the communications teams, who are doing an excellent job of maintaining – and increasing – contact, in particular via internal channels and social media.

Staff, students and alumni join forces to support healthcare professionals

Last but by no means least, **the schools are also working to supply personal protective equipment to healthcare professionals.** Staff and students at **Arts & Métiers** decided to manufacture protective visors for example. Headed up by Nicolas Perry of the I2M research institute in Bordeaux, **the team worked in conjunction with the Intensive Care Unit at Bordeaux University Hospital to design a visor model that was then distributed to the other Arts & Métiers labs.** Thanks to the combined efforts of the campus teams and students in around twenty different cities who are making the visors at home, **6,000 visors can now be produced every week.** To further increase production volumes, the school has made the **designs freely available** so that others can manufacture the visors too. At **AgroParisTech** researchers and staff from the institution's various campuses have helped to collect masks, gloves, gowns, hand sanitiser and surface disinfectants to fulfil the needs of healthcare workers in their area. The collected equipment was delivered to pharmacies, doctors' surgeries, medical centres and hospitals. Another example: in response to an appeal from [MedTech in France](#), around 15 doctoral students and civil engineering students at **MINES ParisTech (PSL)** volunteered to identify concrete solutions to address the shortage of syringe pumps in Intensive Care Units.

About ParisTech: www.paristech.fr

ParisTech is an alliance of top French graduate engineering schools that have been working together for over 20 years to develop joint training, research and innovation projects in the fields of science and technology. The schools belonging to the network are: AgroParisTech, Arts & Métiers, Chimie ParisTech (PSL), the École des Ponts ParisTech, ESPCI Paris (PSL), the Institut d'Optique Graduate School and MINES ParisTech (PSL).